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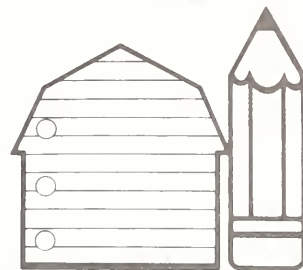
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# Ag in the Classroom

## Notes

United States  
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Agriculture



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A bi-monthly newsletter for the Agriculture in the Classroom program. Sponsored by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture to help students understand the important role of agriculture in the United States economy. For information, contact: Shirley Traxler, Director, Room 234-W, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. 202/447-5727

## Speaker Turns National Conference into a "Biotech Buffet"

By the summer of 1990, you'll probably have the option of buying superfluid-critical-extracted fudge ripple torte (in other words, low-cholesterol ice cream), thanks to the miracle of biotechnology.

At the National Ag in the Classroom Conference in Washington, D.C., guest speaker Dr. John Patrick Jordan, Administrator, Cooperative State Research Service, discussed how the latest developments in biotechnology continue to affect and advance our nation's agricultural commodities.

Jordan explained to attendees that the demand for biotechnology research has led us to a pivotal period in the history of agriculture. "Today, we often eat our meals away from home. When we do eat at home, we want a no-muss, no-fuss, no-preparation, no-cook or quick-cook, no-residue, no-clean-up, four-course meal that is nutritionally balanced, low in calories and high in quality and taste and flavor satisfaction.

"From test tubes to tables, super sleuth scientists are engaged in a search for clues that will

*continued on page 2*



Dr. John Patrick Jordan, Administrator, Cooperative State Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, gives conference attendees food for thought.

## Meet Ag's Best Friend

"Isn't he cute!" is the standard response from kids when they meet Jackpot the Beagle.

Jackpot is a veteran in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Beagle Brigade. These detector dogs work at major international airports to sniff out prohibited agricultural material that travelers carry in their luggage.

Educators learned just how cute and smart Jackpot is when they saw him perform in person at the Ag in the Classroom National Conference on June 6. A mango was hidden in one of six identical suitcases. Jackpot went straight to the suitcase

with the fruit, sat down quietly beside it, and looked up questioningly at his handler Hal Fingerman, an inspector for USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. Hal responded to Jackpot's alert by giving the dog a treat he carried in a small bag attached to his belt. Jackpot gulped down the treat and looked for more business.

People who watch Jackpot perform often ask why people are not supposed to carry mangoes and other fruits among their personal effects. Prohibited fruits may carry exotic fruit flies and other pests not present in this country. When foreign pests enter the country and start attacking

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## From the Director

Dear Readers,

*It was a great pleasure to see so many of you at the National Ag in the Classroom Conference in June.*

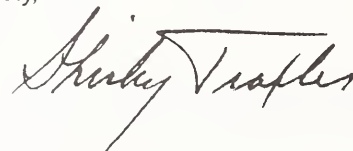
*A special thank you is due to the members of the conference committee: Jean Ibendahl, American Agri-women; Dave Phillips, U.S. Department of Education; Marsha Purcell, American Farm Bureau Federation; Barbara Selover, National Live Stock and Meat Board; and state contacts: Gerry Fuller, Vermont; Mark Linder, California; Betty Jo Malone, Montana; Kelvin Robinson, Florida; JoDahl Theimer,*

*Oklahoma; Al Withers, Minnesota and Betty Wolanyk, New York. Their foresight and creativity assured a conference that was beneficial and enjoyable.*

*If you were unable to attend the conference, this issue of Notes should give you a taste of the highlights.*

*Have a great summer!*

*Yours truly,*



Shirley Traxler



Everybody's favorite USDA employee! Detector dog Jackpot helps keep prohibited fruit out of the country by sniffing luggage at international airports.

## Best Friend

*continued from page 1*

domestic orchards, the result can be devastating to fruit producers and dramatically raise fruit prices.

So how are we able to buy mangoes at the supermarket? Commercially imported mangoes can be checked to verify they don't originate in places that have exotic fruit flies; or mangoes can be treated to kill any fruit flies they may harbor. This procedure is impossible or impractical for one or two fruits imported by travelers.

Restrictions are not limited to fruit. Vegetables, plants, birds, meats and other agricultural products pose hazards from hidden pests or disease organisms. *Travelers' Tips*, a booklet from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, details which agricultural products travelers may bring back safely.

Travelers should remember to declare all agricultural items they bring into the country, including treats passed out by the airline on the return trip to the United States. Only in this way can human and canine inspectors make sure that nothing hazardous is carried into the country.

## National Conference, a "Biotech Buffet"

*continued from page 1*

allow producers to give consumers not only what they want, but what they need to maintain good health," Jordan explained.

According to Jordan, scientists are now fully capable of micro-manipulating genes and restructuring the genome to design vegetables, meats and other products in order to meet optimum nutritional criteria.

For instance, researchers are finding ways to reduce cholesterol in cheese and make genetic changes in animals to lower the fat content in red meat. Jordan said the demand for balanced

nutrients has already led to such products as "lite" meats, low-fat turkey "ham" and a wide variety of convenience foods and microwavable products. "We want it all, and why not?"

Biotechnology is a perfect subject for Ag in the Classroom. "This is a super place to enter the Ag in the Classroom program, because not only does it allow us to talk about quality nutrition, but nutrition for healthy living," Jordan said.

Jordan verbally took attendees on a national tour of ongoing biotechnology research projects:

- At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, researchers are working on cholesterol removal from foods. Using a method called "superfluid critical extraction," compressed carbon dioxide is run through freeze dried food to dissolve most of the cholesterol. As a result, low cholesterol ice cream could be available in the supermarket by

# Spotlight

## The Ag-Ed Principal

Betty Carr is a self-proclaimed "agricultural witness."

Speaking at the National Ag in the Classroom conference in Washington, D.C., the Biggs, California middle/high school principal testified to her agricultural awakening, and charged attendees to join her crusade.

"Agricultural education should be viewed as essential," Carr told an attentive audience. "It can enhance student learning at all levels. It can be used to enhance the scope of the curriculum in many innovative ways. Who will say with me that I will be an agricultural witness?"

Carr says her enthusiasm and commitment to teaching students about the food and fiber system was piqued when she attended the summer Ag Institute, a week-long course sponsored by the California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom under the leadership of its executive director, Mark Linder. "When I attended the Summer Ag Institute in Sacramento," she explained, "I had no idea that agriculture was that all-encompassing and that every facet of my life was somehow intertwined with it."

"Agriculture directly or indirectly involves farm production, ozone layers, waterways, water tables, chemicals, insecticides, flood control, forest fires...it affects our toothpaste. You name it, it's agriculturally based. We know that it's encompassing, so we need some kind of efficient, supportive, productive manner to get agriculture institutionalized in our schools."

Carr pointed out that while many AITC programs are aimed at the primary grades, high school is a prime opportunity to teach students about agri-

"All students, regardless of socio-economic status, ethnicity, gender or general level of academic achievement can benefit from, and should be exposed to, an agricultural learning experience."

culture. English students, for example, can be guided to read such classic literature as *Of Mice and Men*, which can spark interest in agriculture and provide a subject for discussion, debate and essay-writing. Geography or social studies class can be enhanced by introducing students to farm land maps and teaching them about ag resources of their own states.

"All students, regardless of socio-economic status, ethnicity, gender or general level of academic achievement can benefit from, and should be exposed to, an agricultural learning experience," said Carr. "This could excite students, create and promote more motivation for successful learning and preparation for life and careers."

She described the California curriculum that allows students to take high school courses in animal and plant sciences. These courses count toward the life science credits needed to meet university entrance requirements.

Carr emphasized the mainstreaming of agriculture into the classroom. "How can you separate water, soil and life?" she asked her audience. "How can you separate food, clothing and shelter? It is the major strand of education. It is not vocational ed. It is not on the fringe. It is not a separate field. It is the mainstream of education. All else interrelates with it. Until we merge it this way, it will be forever on the fringe. I'll be a practical witness for agriculture as a major strand of education."



Betty Carr

1990.

- At Iowa State University, researchers are developing an enzyme that could be sprinkled on foods to reduce cholesterol levels.
- Scientists at Michigan State University are using biotechnology techniques to develop a safe hormone treatment which will make the lean cuts of pork from boars more acceptable to consumers.
- University of Georgia researchers are giving us new value-added products from the peanut. These include a highly nutritious noodle which combines peanut flour with wheat and cowpea flour, and a high-protein peanut tofu-type spread available in such flavors as chocolate and tangerine.
- University Scientists from Arizona, Texas, California, Wisconsin, Idaho State, Florida and the USDA Agricultural Research Service have

developed the "super carrot," a carrot containing 50 percent more beta carotene than the average carrot.

- Montana State University scientists are using barley flour to make high-protein, high-fiber bread sticks.

At the conclusion of his presentation, Jordan reminded attendees to take advantage of one of the best teacher resources available. "You have in every state a land grant institution that I think you have made a great deal of linkage with. But if perchance you're not hooked in with your land grant institution, I want to take this opportunity to emphasize that there is a vice president, a vice chancellor, a dean of agriculture, an experiment station director and an extension director that would love to deal with you and help support your program if you would give them a chance."



National Ag in the Classroom Conference

# Educating for the 21st Century



(ABOVE) Dr. Orville G. Bentley, Assistant Secretary for Science and Education, U.S. Department of Agriculture, greets California high school principal Betty Carr (left) and New York State contact Betty Wolanyk (center).



(ABOVE RIGHT) (l-r) High school teacher Bill Riggs, Minnesota state contact Al Withers, and Walt Munsterman, Vice President, Minnesota Education Association, review their state's display.



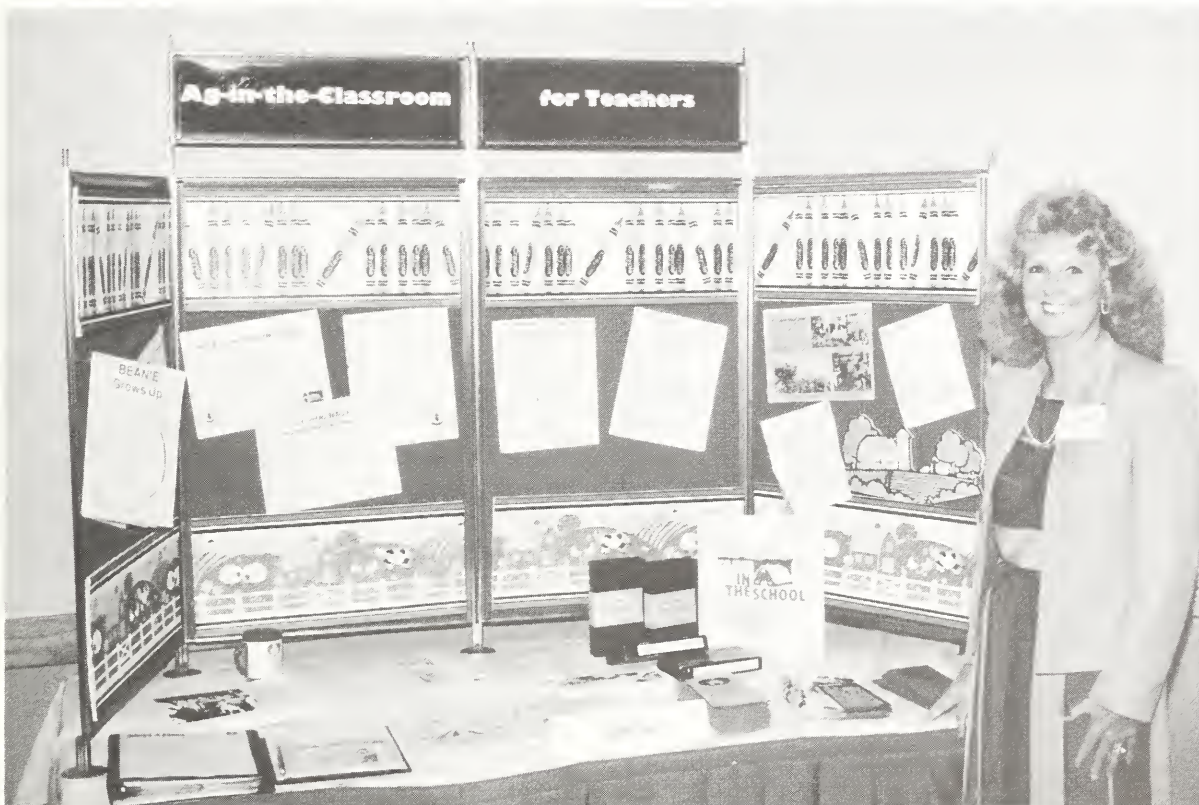
(RIGHT) Fourth graders from Machen Elementary School, Hampton Virginia, sing about agriculture to the delight of conference attendees.





(ABOVE LEFT) State contact Betty Jo Malone displays Montana's abundant ag materials.

(ABOVE RIGHT) Jackpot the beagle, a detector dog for the USDA's Beagle Brigade, unleashes his talent and charm for conference attendees.



(LEFT) Sally Brooks, Illinois state contact, shows off her state's best ag resources.

(BELOW) Educators exchange thoughts and ideas at the AITC newcomers meeting.





# Minnesota...The Land of 10,000 Resources

It's certainly getting that way!

Hot off the press, the *Minnesota Guide To Educational Resources About Agriculture* is bound to become one of the most popular teacher resources in the state. The K-12 guide lists and describes over 150 resources, from films, books, and magazines to posters and field trip information. The main purpose of the guide is to highlight Minnesota-based classroom resources, but a brief section of selected national resources is also featured.



Minnesota Governor Rudy Perpich (left) visits a 6th grade class in Marshall for Ag Day.

Titles include such films as "Wholly Cow" and "Let's Talk Turkey," and publications like *Minnesota Super Bean* and *The Fantastic Minnesota Farmer*.

According to Al Withers, program director, Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom, the idea to create the guide came naturally. "As we were working on other projects, we kept abreast of the state's abundant ag-ed materials. It quickly became evident we needed to put together a resource

guide to give teachers easy access to related resources and activities."

Withers says the *Minnesota Guide To Educational Resources About Agriculture* has already been distributed to every public and K-12 school library in the state. "This kind of guide is the most efficient way to promote materials related to Ag in the Classroom."

The AITC *Minnesota Agriculture Magazine*, nicknamed the "AgMag," has also enjoyed wide distribution and acceptance. In its second year of publication, the fact-filled quarterly now reaches every sixth grade student in 1,225 of the state's schools. The magazine covers all aspects of Minnesota agriculture, including its history and current events. There's even a "Dear Aggie" column, which answers readers' questions about ag topics.

"There are so many resources out there, you just have to find creative ways to promote them," Withers advises. "If a state AITC program is not ready to develop its own materials, like the AgMag, I would suggest putting together a resource guide. In light of the fact that the concept of teaching about agriculture is supported by many state agencies, organizations and private industries, I think it's important to have one central resource."

Withers says Minnesota AITC believes in calling on every resource possible—especially people. That's why Minnesota Governor Rudy Perpich is getting into the act. He recently visited Marshall Middle School, Marshall, to remind students about the importance of learning about agriculture. "The Governor has shown great interest in Ag in the Classroom, and he helped us promote Ag Day by personally speaking to sixth graders," says Withers.

Note — For more information, contact Al Withers, Program Director, Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom, 90 West Plato Boulevard, St. Paul, Minnesota 55107. Telephone: (612) 296-6688

## Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Brochures Available

USDA'S Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) protects American agriculture by preventing the introduction of foreign plant pests and diseases and controlling or eradicating them on a national basis, as directed by Congress. The following brochures tell about this work and how it benefits the nation.

When ordering publications, please indicate the quantity needed and explain use if multiple copies are required. Do not send payment or stamps; there is no charge for publications or mailing. A self-addressed label would be helpful. Please write to: Printing and Distribution Management Branch, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA, Federal Building, Room G-100, 6505

Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, MD 20782. Phone (301) 436-8413.

### Selected Listings:

*Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service*, July 1979. Presents an overview of how the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service works to protect American agriculture.

*Plant Protection and Quarantine*, June 1983. Describes overall Plant Protection and Quarantine missions, specific programs, and the people who carry them out.

*Meet Agriculture's Beagle Brigade*, August 1986. Describes the passively trained corps of dogs that

*continued on page 7*



help detect agricultural contraband and urges travelers to declare prohibited items.

*Travelers' Tips*, PA 1083, October 1987. Lists what food, plant, and animal products can and cannot be brought into the United States from foreign countries. Also available in Spanish (Consejos a los Viajeros), Italian (Consigli ai Viaggiatori), and Japanese.

*Biological Control: Spreading the Benefits*, July 1987. Explains how parasites, predators, and pathogens can be used to control insect and plant pests on a broad scale.

*Don't Move Gypsy Moth*, PA 1329, July 1985. Describes the northeastern areas of the United States quarantined for the gypsy moth, a major pest of trees. Tells people planning to move their

households how to make sure their outdoor household articles don't spread gypsy moths.

*Careers for Veterinarians*, December 1979. Describes positions for veterinarians in APHIS and the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS).

*Veterinary Services: Protecting America's Animal Health*, October 1987. Provides information on the activities and programs of APHIS' Veterinary Services.

*The Animal Welfare Act, How it Protects Your Dog and Cat*, November 1979. Details how the law provides for the humane handling, shipping, care, and treatment of dogs, cats, and other warm-blooded animals.

*Exotic Newcastle and the Pet Bird*, August 1978. Tells what exotic Newcastle disease is and why it is important for pet bird owners to know about it. Also tells bird owners how to protect their pets.

## 8,000 Oklahoma Students Experience Farm-Life

For one week in April, some old, abandoned barns came out of retirement, and local children saw firsthand how butter is made, how cows are milked, and what a turkey looks like before it ends up in a grocery store freezer.

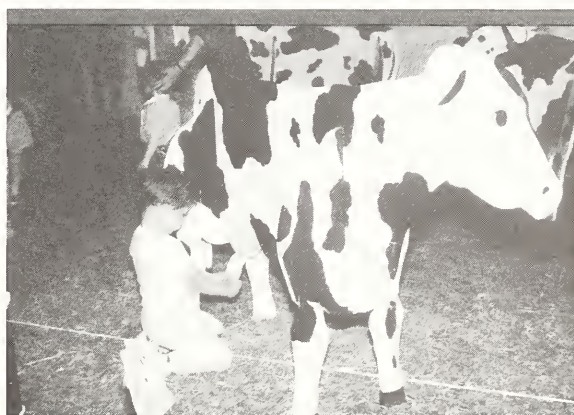
The Deer Creek Farm in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, is the first glimpse of farm life for many inner-city youths. "A lot of children think that you just go to the store and buy food!" said tour guide Angie Bilken. "The purpose of the farm tour is to teach children where farm products really come from."

Once a wheat and cattle farm, Deer Creek is now loaned to the local PTA for the yearly event. The PTA runs the farm with help from community volunteers and FFA students. Farmers loan their rabbits, bulls, llamas, ponies and burros. Commodity groups bring crop samples and set up demonstrations of butter churning and peanut butter-making. Over 1500 students per day learn about the crops they may have seen from the car window or on a neighbor's farm. "The volunteers show the children where grains come from and what they look like before and after the harvest. Then we tell them about products in which grains can be found," Bilken explained.

The farm animals are the star attractions, and the student's reactions to the animals range from screams of terror to "ooh's" and "ahh's." Equally popular, however, is the herd of wooden cows. Udders made of rubber gloves and silicone let children experience "milking a cow."

"They started with real cows," laughed JoDahl Theimer, AITC state contact. "But when it went to 8,000 kids, they switched to wood!"

Teacher Debbie Leslie said that the information packets distributed on the tour provide her with material she can take back to the classroom. "My class has been studying the early colonial period and the colonists way of life. This farm tour has exhibits that show how yarn, butter and many different other things were and still are made by



(ABOVE) Urban kids see the other side of the fence at the Deer Creek Farm in Oklahoma City.

A pre-schooler becomes utterly fascinated with the farm's herd of wooden cows.

some people," the fifth grade teacher explained. "The tour brings farm life to true life for some kids who may not have the opportunity to experience farm animals."

The individuals listed here are key reference persons in each state. If you have any questions, want to make reports, or need more information about your state's Ag in the Classroom program, contact the following:

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